

Public Safety and Security Committee

**Written Testimony of Keith Sheldon of AEG (Operator of the XL Center)
In Support of H.B. No. 5277,
An Act Concerning the Legalization and Regulation of Mixed Martial Arts**

February 26, 2013

Dear Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

My name is Keith Sheldon and I am the Director of Business Affairs and Event Programming for AEG, the operator of the XL Center. I submit this written statement in support of House Bill No. 5277, An Act Concerning the Legalization and Regulation of Mixed Martial Arts.

By way of background, AEG is the world's leading provider of live entertainment and sports programming. AEG Facilities is a stand-alone division of AEG that owns, operates and consults with more than 100 entertainment venues worldwide. AEG has operated the XL Center through a sublease with the Connecticut Development Authority ("CDA") since 2007. In my role with AEG, I am responsible for ensuring we are consistently programming first-class event content in the XL Center for the benefit of the Capital Region.

Mixed Martial Arts ("MMA") is an extremely exciting sport with a tremendous following that continues to grow worldwide. I have seen first-hand through my experience working with representatives from other AEG venues how high level MMA events (such as those sponsored by the UFC) bring record-setting crowds and revenues to venues and regions in which they play.

I am confident that a UFC event, or a similar top-notch MMA event, would result in one of the highest grossing sell-outs in the XL Center's long history. Given the current 10% State Admissions Tax that is applied to gross event receipts for all XL Center events; a ticket gross in excess of \$2 million (which has been the norm in other AEG venues) would represent a true financial boon to the State. Moreover, a sold-out event with such widespread appeal will act as a true economic driver for the Capital Region bringing increased footfall and associated spending to downtown restaurants, bars, parking lots and hotels.

Perhaps most importantly, MMA represents job creation in Connecticut. For a high-level MMA event, the XL Center would ramp-up operational and staffing needs, which ultimately

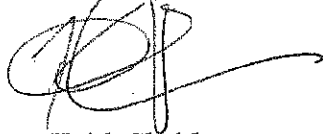
means the manifestation of several hundred jobs at the venue alone through stagehand, guest service, box office and custodial labor.

Finally, sport is a business in which people – the athletes and fans – are the industry's most valuable commodity. Accordingly, the issue of the safety of both XL Center guests and the athlete event participants is of the highest concern. This bill seeks to place MMA under the jurisdiction of the State Boxing Commission and would allow the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to adopt regulations to regulate the conduct, supervision and safety of MMA matches, including the licensing of sponsors and participants of such matches, and to set a reasonable fee for the issuance of licenses to sponsors and participants in MMA matches. We believe this is appropriate to ensure that the contests are both fair and safe.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge the Committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Keith Sheldon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith Sheldon
Director, Business Affairs
AEG / XL Center